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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000543

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

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TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CE](#) [MV](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 048 (03/26/04)

Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead for reasons
1.5 (b) and (d).

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- LTTE SPLIT

CAMPAIGN NUGGETS

[1](#)1. (SBU) FYI. Here are the latest nuggets of news:

-- President Kumaratunga attended a large rally in the southern town of Matara on March 25. She did not say anything dramatic, per se. The rally was well-attended. Based on what we are hearing, the President's SLFP-JVP alliance (the "UPFA") appears to be doing quite well in Sri Lanka's deep south. (Poloff Chris Long will be visiting Galle and Matara over the weekend and will take the temperature of the region before next week's election.)

-- The state-run media continues to twist poll results. As we mentioned in Colombo 514, the DAILY NEWS and its companion Sinhala-language edition fabricated the results of a USAID funded poll in their March 20 edition. On March 26, the DAILY NEWS had a front-page banner headline stating: "Academy of Educational Development of USAID funded study shows: Kumaratunga best suited to run country". The article was accurate re the poll results, but was heavily spun in tone towards the UPFA. We are issuing a clarifying press statement. You may get bleats about the DAILY NEWS story from Devinda Subasinghe.

-- In the meantime, PM Wickremesinghe spoke to a large rally held near Kandy on March 25. As he has been doing, the PM touted the achievements of the peace process.
(POL)

LTTE SPLIT

[1](#)2. (C) FYI. The LTTE issued a harsh warning to potential supporters of rebel eastern commander Karuna late March 25. The long statement, which is posted on "TamilNet," is not explicit in its threats, but the message is clear: Pull away from Karuna and fast. Most observers believe that the Tigers are waiting until after the election to deal with Karuna. There are already unsubstantiated reports that LTTE intelligence operatives are infiltrating into Karuna's Batticaloa/Ampara sector. (POL)

LUNSTEAD